

MINUTES
SANTA MONICA TRAVEL & TOURISM (SMTT)
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS - WEDNESDAY, September 15, 2021
Virtually on Zoom

Call to Order: Chairman Albin Gielicz called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m.

Roll Call & Self Introductions: Chairman Gielicz called for self-introductions. Board Members and those present provided brief self-introductions. The following persons were recorded in attendance:

Board Present: Chairman Albin Gielicz, Vice Chair Neil Carrey, Secretary Jan Williamson, Member Lauralee Asch, Member Younes Atallah, Member Gerry Peck, Member Jeff Klocke, Member RoseMary Regalbuto, and City Liaison Anuj Gupta.

Also, Present: SMTT President/CEO Misti Kerns, SMTT Chief Operating Officer Evan Edwards, SMTT Chief People Officer Rachel Lozano, SMTT Marketing Manager Mandy Eck, SMTT Marketing Coordinator Christine Emhardt, and SMPD Cpt. Thomas McLaughlin.

Absent: Member Darlene Evans, Member Shahid Kayani, Member Laurel Rosen.

SMPD Update: SMPD Captain Thomas McLaughlin gave details on the \$1 million given to decrease crime in DTSM, Santa Monica Pier, and on Santa Monica Beach. In the first 5-6 weeks, \$80,000 was used to increase officers and staffing in the areas. Reported crime rates in the last 2-3 months have gone down will provide further details. Chairman Gielicz inquired about the staffing at the Pier and speculations about crime families, prostitution, and human trafficking. Captain McLaughlin said on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays there are 6 officers at the pier. There was a shooting when the pier was closed, and there are still problems with unlicensed vendors. Captain McLaughlin mentioned the city has recently passed new laws/regulations about cooking with fire/gas on the pier to protect the pier itself. Captain McLaughlin does not believe there is a crime family involved; additionally, undercover officers have not found any drug dealers, prostitution, or human trafficking. Member Klocke stated a need for dedicated officers at the pier. He mentioned the SMPD chief said that at current staffing levels, it is not possible to have officers dedicated to the pier. Treasurer Atallah inquired about the sustainability of additional officers and recruitment. Captain McLaughlin mentioned the SMPD offers overtime to officers (including the weekend pier coverage) and assigns any spots not filled voluntarily. The SMPD is currently recruiting additional officers. Member Asch asked about rumors spreading and how to prevent or correct. Captain McLaughlin says open communication is needed and provided his phone and email to anyone with questions or concerns. Thomas.mclaughlin@santamonica.gov, 310-458-8430 for desk and 424-280-2405 for cell. SMTT CEO Kerns thanked Captain McLaughlin for joining and stated that SMTT will help to correct rumors whenever it is possible.

Approval of the July 2021, Board Meeting Minutes: Secretary Williamson presented the Meeting Minutes; Vice Chair Carrey moved to approve the minutes; Chairman Gielicz seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously with members Evans, Kayani and Rosen absent.

Acceptance of the June 2021 Financial Memo: Treasurer Atallah presented the June 2021 Financial Memo. Vice Chair Carrey moved to accept the Financial Memo; Secretary Williamson seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously with members Evans, Kayani and Rosen absent.

Approval of the Hospitality Improvement District Funds. Treasurer Atallah presented funds for use in an area south of the Pier to Pico Blvd, from the beach walk to Ocean Ave. SMTT has committed a \$200,000 one-time payment (allotted at 20k-25k per month) to kickstart expenses to pay for 4-5 people per month to clean the area, through a third party. The money has come from savings from the City Funds, and not TMD funds. Only public areas are to be cleaned and not any of the hotels' private areas. Will start as 6-month trial with proposal from Chrysalis. Following the trial, four hotels– Loews Santa Monica Beach Hotel, JW Marriott Santa Monica le Merigot, Shutters on the Beach and Hotel Casa del Mar– to assess a voluntary assessment collection not yet final but est., \$2/booking for larger hotels and \$1 for smaller hotels, to be used to continue the program should the pilot prove successful. At that point, or in the future, can work to expand to more areas or use for beach experience

improvements. Member Gerry asked about using funds for a specific area of the city, CEO Kerns assures this money is coming from the City Funds and not TMD funds and mentions that this is a key area for most tourists and is necessary to improve the overall experience of a clean and safe Santa Monica. It is supplemental and NOT meant to replace the city's efforts. Program estimated to begin October 15, 2021, however, city needs to agree to MOU. Secretary Williams moved to accept the Hospitality Improvement District Funds; Member Regalbuto seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously with members Evans, Kayani and Rosen absent.

Pier Concerns: CEO Kerns shows videos of unlicensed vendors lining Santa Monica Pier and how SMPD is outnumbered and unable to remove them all. Similar problems are happening in San Francisco and other popular tourist cities. Unlicensed vendors pose a threat to the pier experience of safe and clean due to the presence of hot grease, open flame and fire risk, and illegal dumping of trash. Kerns mentioned that businesses report a loss of family business. Kerns mentioned possibly moving them to a designated vendor marketplace area. Member Klocke shows images of the severity of the problem, with unlicensed vendors spanning the entrance to the pier to the end, blocking the arcade and restaurants. He thanks Captain McLaughlin for joining but wants SMTT to push the new Chief of Police and City Manager to be proactive in these specific problems.

City Liaison Anuj Gupta joins at 5:56pm.

City Manager Update: City Liaison Gupta stated it is a work in progress to remove unlicensed vendors; the city's police, fire, and city are working together to fully enforce new regulations. He suggests updates to signage to support the city's efforts. Interim City Attorney is leaving at the end of the month with replacement to be announced soon. New City Manager, David White, to start October 11. New Chief of Police replacement to be announced soon. New Fire Chief is still being recruited. Library Director position has an interim in place and is still recruiting a replacement. City Council meeting took place the previous night and covered items on safety and cleanliness, adoption of a housing plan over the next 8 years, and a Third Street revitalization plan.

SMTT Staff Updates: Eck shared the Fall 2021 campaign will be flexible and aiming for a larger campaign in 2022. The objective is to promote Santa Monica as a safe and responsible overnight place to visit during shoulder season. Success will be measured in hotel reservations, bookings, and web/ad engagement. Channel mix will include targeted digital display ads, outfeed paid social ads (social was best performing channel in 2021 Spring campaign for the lowest cost), Online Travel Agency (Co-Op with Visit CA through Expedia), print (visitor guide), influencers, SEM, & domestic travel trade campaigns. Target regions: western USA and key states. New website overhaul has begun, will be more user-friendly, especially for mobile users, and focus on every part of the visitor journey from introduction, planning, arrival, to use during the visit. Target launch May 2022.

Lorenzo shared SMTT's first retail popup at ESTO was a success. Recently onboarded a new Travel Specialist, Luis Vasquez, who was a previous employee. Dedicated internet was added to the Pier Visitor Center, will also be added to the Kiosk location soon. Threshold 360 to capture the Visitor Services locations as well in 360-degree video on santamonica.com.

Edwards shared that the new Director of Communications and new part-time Sales Manager will start on September 27, and a new Assistant for CEO Kerns to start October 4. CMO recruitment has begun. The recruitment process for Public Relations positions will begin soon. Open enrollment for staff benefits will begin October 1. The 2020/2021 Financial Audits are planned for last/first quarter. SMTT has begun repayment plan of the SVA Recovery Loan. The PPP forgiveness application is underway; confident the loan will be forgiven. Fall events include Tourism Summit on October 21, virtually or in-person to be decided. Santa MoniCARES October to collect new socks for those in need. 100 Homes Initiative: Get people off the streets and get them into housing in SM (more to come). Fundraising with the Church on Ocean Park (upcoming: racial justice work, toiletry kits around the holidays for unhoused people, event for kids with disabilities, possibly an 80s prom event with the GSSA able to use the space after for an LGBTQ prom next year).

CEO Update: Kerns gave Sales update that IPW in Vegas is next week, not attending with any partners. U.S. Travel Association received permission to bring 350 international business representatives for the sales event. CalTravel update: Visit California received \$95 million to promote CA visitation, some of which will be used for MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions). Kerns reviewed the MICE branding update for

California, including the Santa Monica-specific logo. Virtuoso show that staff attended featured meetings with nearly 100 luxury travel advisors, SMTT hosted a FAM (familiarization tour) for 3 of their top-selling advisors. SMTT is working hard to show travel advisors Santa Monica is a safe and clean destination. Current campaigns and partnerships include: VCA & AAA, Hotel Beds, Virtuoso, Santa Monica Travel Agent Training Module (Launch Oct 1), United Airlines (2.3 million impressions per month), FAM tour with 7 members of United Airlines, Signature Travel network, and CVENT. A total of 3 trade shows were attended by SMTT in the past month, plus Site Classic. AFM is going virtual in 2021 a loss but an understandable one they plan to be back in 2022. SMTT staff continues to work remotely. Chief Marketing Officer position has been posted, currently trying to hire directly but deepening on applications, if no success will move to a recruiter.

For the Good of the Order: Chairman Gielicz reminded the Board of the new Montana Avenue Art Walk on Sept 25th. SMTT mentioned sponsorship of the Art Walk as well as Hispanic Heritage Month and the Pico Youth Car Show.

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

Adjournment: Chairman Gielicz called to adjourn the meeting, Member Regalbuto moved to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Treasurer Atallah, the meeting was adjourned at 6:44 p.m.